

Homecoming

Preparing your house for your
return and recovery





Welcome home

When you're coming home after an illness or surgery, it's an exciting time. But it can also be an uncertain time.

How do you keep your home safe? What can you do if there's a problem? This guide will help you answer some of your questions and hopefully make your homecoming safe and special.

Our goal is to provide you with the very best home health available. If you have questions about home health or any other care you may need, don't hesitate to contact us or your physician. In the meantime, we hope this guide helps you on your way to getting back home and back on your feet.

Assess your home: a checklist

Some simple changes can improve safety at home and decrease your risk of falling.

After your hospital stay, you may notice a decrease in your mobility and need assistance. With that in mind, there are many things you can do now to better prepare your home for your return.

✓	General considerations
	If possible, enter your home without climbing steps. If you need to climb steps to enter your home, determine if a neighbor, friend or family member will be routinely available to provide assistance if needed.
	Remove small throw rugs, and ensure area rugs have non-slip backing or are taped down with double-sided tape, especially along the edges.
	Reattach or remove any loose flooring, and repair holes or rips in carpet or linoleum.
	Remove phone or electrical cords from all walkway areas. If cords cannot be removed, cover with a cable concealer (sold at office supply stores). This will improve the situation, but not eliminate the cord as a tripping hazard. (Be aware that running a cord under carpet or tape can lead to cord failure and may pose an electrical fire hazard.)
	Move furniture, baskets or other items that may block your path when using an assistive device.
	Be sure a telephone is easily accessible in each room of the main living areas. If using a cordless phone or cell phone, be sure the charger is easily accessible and the phone is fully charged.
	Make sure that light switches and lamps are easily accessible so you don't have to lean outside the base of your walker. Place nightlights in areas where lights are more difficult to reach.
	If you have stairs inside the home, be sure handrails are secure and a light can be turned on from the top and the bottom of the stairs.



✓	General considerations, continued
	Check that any steps entering the home are solid and well supported. If there is a handrail, make be sure it is secure.
	Wear snug, non-slip, low-heeled shoes or slippers.
	If you will be using a walker, attach a sturdy bag or a small basket to it to hold your phone, a notepad, a pen and any other items you will need to have close by—or you can use a fanny pack.
	Place a chair with a firm back in the kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and other rooms you will use so you can sit when you do your daily tasks.
	Make sure everything you need is easy to get to and on the same floor where you will spend most of your time. If you will need to use the stairs, you should limit using them to once a day.
	Clear pathways through your garage or patio of any equipment, furniture or other obstacles.
✓	Hallways
	Remove any unnecessary items from your hallways to improve safety and access.
	Use a nightlight in the hall, or, if there is not an outlet, consider leaving a nearby light on to provide visibility in the hallway.
✓	Living/family room
	Establish a “command center” near the chair you will be using most often. Although you may need to be up and moving frequently, be sure items, such as remote controls, are easy to reach. Also have a water bottle or other container for liquids so you can stay hydrated.



✓	Bedroom
	Consider setting up a temporary bedroom on the main level if you must climb stairs to reach your bedroom. Make sure a bathroom is available.
	Keep bedspreads and linens from draping onto the floor as they can catch the leg of a walker and may be a tripping hazard.
	To improve safety when getting in and out of bed, remove casters if they do not lock.
	Make sure you have room to maneuver beside and around your bed with your walker. If possible, move the bed or other furniture to allow increased clearance.
	Consider temporarily rearranging drawers so that a few of each of your most frequently needed clothing items (socks, undergarments, pants and shirts) are located in a top drawer. Move shoes from the floor of the closet to an easy-to-reach shelf or the top of the dresser.
✓	Avoiding falls
	Pets that are small or very active may cause you to trip. For the first few weeks you are home, consider having your pet stay elsewhere.
	Do not carry anything when you are walking around. You may need your hands to help you balance.
	<p>Practice using a cane, walker, crutches, or a wheelchair. It is especially important to practice the correct ways to perform daily tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sit down to use the toilet and stand up after using the toilet • get in and out of the shower • use the shower chair • go up and down stairs

✓	Kitchen
	Ask your doctor if there are specific foods you should eat or avoid.
	Prior to returning home, move or place commonly used items (like pots and pans) in cabinets that are easily accessible to prevent excessive bending or stooping.
	Ensure that you have adequate food in the house or that a caregiver or neighbor is available for shopping.
	Plan to utilize a medication pillbox for any current or new medications. Make a list of all your medications and keep it by your pill planner. This will help you and others accurately fill the planner.
✓	Bathroom (Check your medical plan for Durable Medical Equipment coverage)
	Clarify bathing instructions with your doctor (sponge bath, shower, tub bath).
	<p>Sit on a bath or shower chair when taking a shower.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure it has rubber tips on the bottom of each leg. • Buy a seat without arms if it is placed in a bathtub.
	<p>You may need to have safety bars in your bathroom. Grab bars should be well secured vertically or horizontally to the wall, not diagonally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use towel racks as grab bars. They cannot support your weight. • You will need two grab bars. One helps you get in and out of the tub. The other helps you stand from a sitting position.
	Consider getting a raised toilet seat with arms to help you move from sitting to standing, especially if your hips are lower than your knees while sitting on the seat.
	Consider installing a grab bar to improve safety when getting in or out of the tub or shower.
	Use a non-skid bath mat outside the tub for firm footing. Keep the floor outside the tub or shower dry.
	Consider applying non-slip strips to your tub or shower surface. Strips can be found at most home improvement and hardware stores.
	Install a nightlight. Use of an assistive device, such as a walker, makes it especially important to see clearly while you are moving about. A nightlight is an inexpensive way to improve your safety.

When to call your doctor, 911 or your home health provider

Since we do not provide emergency care, please call **911** or go to the nearest emergency room if you experience any of the following:

- Severe chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive bleeding
- Excessive pain
- A fall or inability to get up

Tell ER personnel:

Your physician's name _____

Physician's phone number _____

Your home health provider _____

Although you probably will not experience any unusual problems or complications after you return home, it is important to be aware of potential signs and symptoms that warrant a discussion with your home health or healthcare provider. These will be discussed at the time of facility discharge and during admission to home health. As always, if you have any questions, we are here to help ensure the best possible outcome for you and your family.

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Let us bring clinical excellence home when you need to get back on your feet after a hospital stay. For all eligible patients, we help you manage conditions like COPD, diabetes and heart failure.



We bring you highly skilled nurses and therapists to help get you back on your feet.



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